

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2016 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Jim Brett, Jack Casey, Cindy Donaldson, David Krimmel, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd, Mark Russo; Alternate John Burdick, First Selectman Dan Jerram.

ABSENT: Alternate Bill Baxter.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Bob Moore, Lori LaMere, Kathryn Boughton of the Republican American, Joe Toro (7:14)

Assistant Town Clerk and Commission Secretary Debbie Ventre administered the oath of office to Jack Casey for his newly appointed term as Member.

Donna LaPlante as temporary chair of the February meeting, called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

1. ELECTION OF A TEMPORARY CHAIR

Mrs. LaPlante asked for approval from all members to continue as temporary Chair.

2. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

As all regular members were present, no alternates were seated.

3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS – CHAIRMAN & VICE CHAIRMAN

Temporary Chairman LaPlante asked for nominations for Chairman.

MOTION Cindy Donaldson, second Jim Brett to nominate Mark Russo to serve as Chairman.

Temporary Chairman LaPlante asked for additional nominations. Hearing none she called for a vote on the motion. Unanimously approved.

At this point, the newly elected Chairman accepted control of the meeting.

Chairman Russo asked for nominations for Vice Chairman.

MOTION Donna LaPlante, second Shelley Lloyd to nominate David Krimmel to serve as Vice-Chairman.

Unanimously approved.

4. MOMENT OF SILENCE

Chairman Russo asked that all present observe a moment of silence in honor of former Chairman David Childs who passed away last week, in recognition of all his work for the town.

Ms. Lloyd commented that the Commission as a group should do something to recognize David or possibly assist with the Memorial Service.

5. WELCOME NEW MEMBER – JACK CASEY

Chairman Russo asked Jack Casey to give members a summary of his experience in the town. Mr. Casey shared that he has lived in town for 40 years and described his experiences operating businesses in the area including a new venture called Northwest Aqualift.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

February 11, 2016 special meeting

MOTION Mr. Krimmel, second Ms. Lloyd, to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2016 special meeting.

Unanimously approved. Mr. Russo, Mr. Brett, Mr. Casey and Ms. Donaldson abstained.

7. REVIEW MISSION STATEMENT, BY-LAWS AND MEMBER VACANCIES

Ms. Lloyd read the Mission Statement of the Economic Development Commission adopted December 3, 2001. Ms. Donaldson inquired why EDC needs bylaws.

Mr. Krimmel commented that without by-laws even the elections which were held earlier are not required. He noted that only by reviewing other Commission's by-laws can this Commission determine how they would like the Commission to operate. He offered to research by-laws from other town commissions and present at the next meeting. If this Commission were to opt not to establish by-laws then perhaps the ordinance establishing this Commission should be amended.

Mr. Casey noted that this Commission has operated well for 55 years without by-laws and questioned whether establishing by-laws is a worthwhile use of the Commission members time.

Chairman Russo noted that he spoke with the First Selectman following the last Selectman's meeting and asked if the Commission could review potential candidates understanding that the Board of Selectmen has the final decision on who is to be appointed. He suggested that this Commission could use a Real Estate specialist.

Other members commented that a younger individual (under 30) would bring a different perspective than current members.

Mr. Krimmel commented that he believes this Commission can identify a skill set that would be useful in achieving the Commission goals and ask the Board of Selectmen for candidates with those skills.

Mr. Casey expressed that since this is an appointed board minority representation does not apply. Mrs. LaPlante corrected that misconception and stated that minority representation applies to all boards and commissions regardless of whether they are elected or appointed.

Mr. Casey commented that this Commission should focus on Economic Development and planning to utilize the budget funds.

11. CURRENT BUDGET BALANCE

Secretary circulated copies of the current budget expenses report and the planned allocations. Ms. Lloyd commented that she does not believe that any funds should be taken from the EDC funds without the approval of the Commission.

Mr. Krimmel commented that he believes the budget should be the responsibility of the Chairman. Ms. Donaldson commented that the reason the commission asked to review the budget on a monthly basis was because there were charges against Commission funds that had not been approved by the Commission.

8. SIGNAGE COMMITTEE UPDATE – Ms. Lloyd/Ms. Donaldson

Ms. Lloyd asked about the planned design for the signs with the interchangeable banners. She mentioned that there needs to be more than one item on each of the flag/banners.

With Mr. Baxter out of town, Ms. Lloyd will check with the vendor to better understand the design concept.

9. CREATION OF COMMUNICATION SUB-COMMITTEE TO ADDRESS SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE, WELCOME PACKETS, ETC.

Chairman Russo mentioned that at the last Selectman's meeting there was discussion about new communications from the town.

Ms. Donaldson inquired if the newsletter would be put out to bid. Mr. Casey noted that the newsletter will probably be done in house as has been done in the past. Ms. Donaldson noted that she would like to be involved in the design in order to incorporate the same design elements that this Commission has been developing.

Ms. Lloyd commented that she would prefer not to receive separate pieces of mail from the various commissions and organizations in town. Mr. Casey commented that he does not believe it is practical to expect the Recreation Commission newsletter and the Conservation Commission flyer to be merged with the town newsletter.

Mr. Brett commented that he believes this topic is getting away from the initiative of this Commission. He believes that once the goals are established integrating the tag line and promoting the town should be on that list.

Mr. Krimmel agreed with Mr. Brett and expressed that this commission should focus on bringing visitors to this town and making the town attractive so that people want to move here and live here. The focus should be on marketing the assets of this town.

Chairman Russo noted that possibly the Commission needs to hire a part-time person to compile press releases for events in town to get the information out there. Ms. Donaldson noted that she already promotes events on social media for the town.

10. FISHING DERBY

Ms. Donaldson noted that she is helping out with marketing for the fishing derby and mentioned that they have renamed it *The David Childs New Hartford Fishing Derby*. The format this year will be different and they are soliciting local businesses to participate and assist in sponsorship. They are approaching Michel Angelo's to have a breakfast and hopefully have Parrot Delaney do something on Saturday evening.

Ms. Donaldson's company, Red Barn Consulting is working on promoting the event through various media channels. This is the tenth year but the ninth fishing derby since there was no derby last year. Next year, the goal is to have a big event for the tenth derby.

Mr. Casey asked about the format of the derby. Chairman Russo clarified that Grady is soliciting enrollment/registrations at UpCountry Sport Fishing and the weigh in may be at Parrott Delaney. Ms. Lloyd asked about programs for kids. Chairman Russo mentioned that the fees for children will be donated to Emma's Angels.

Mr. Casey asked if there would be a charge for participants. Mr. Russo clarified that in the past participants only had to pay to register if they wanted to try for the tagged fish. This year there will be a nominal registration fee for all registrants. There are plans to market outside of town. The goal is to promote this event and make it bigger than ever before. The event will be held on Memorial Day weekend.

Mr. Brett suggested that perhaps commission members could assist with soliciting sponsorship. Mr. Casey and Mr. Brett will work together to identify potential sponsors. Chairman Russo indicated that they do not want to bring in competitors against UpCountry. Mr. Toro asked if some of the UpCountry suppliers could be contacted for donations.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Chairman Russo shared his vision for goals of the Commission:

1. Develop the opportunity for new businesses, mixed use development, and additional housing to come into town to build the grand list.
2. Rails to Trails to get it built and connected to Collinsville.

Mr. Brett gave a quick summary of progress in pursuing grant funds to identify the best route with a road safety audit from DOT. He noted that Torrington is expanding their trail toward Winsted and toward Naugatuck and Winsted is working on their trail, so we need to move forward or risk being the town without a trail. The committee is pursuing funds and the administration seems supportive.

3. Downtown Initiative
4. Town Marketing

Ms. Lloyd expressed that she believes those 4 topics are exactly what the commission should be pursuing and noted that the Commission should not add anything since there are sub sets to each of those items.

Chairman Russo would like to establish task forces instead of subcommittees. He would like to allocate 7 minutes at each meeting for each task force to update their progress during the prior month. He would like to see the Commission reach out to engage businesses in town and draw new businesses into town. Additionally, he would like to invite a business to speak at each meeting. Secretary Ventre commented that a guest has been invited for April from Farmington Valley Visitors Association. He would like to give her 20 minutes. Chairman Russo would like to also invite Parrott Delaney to attend the next meeting. Mr. Brett identified the questions to be asked of visiting businesses.

Mr. Casey will contact the New Hartford Business Council to let them know EDC will be reaching out to local businesses to attend meetings. Ms. Donaldson commented that she recalled Mr. Krimmel has already compiled a list of businesses. Mr. Krimmel will arrange to have his list scanned. Mrs. LaPlante commented that Mr. Krimmel's list is probably more complete because not all businesses belong to the Business Council.

Ms. Donaldson inquired if the Task Forces should be established tonight or at the next meeting. Chairman Russo expressed that he believes the task forces have been identified except for number 1. He sees himself, Mr. Krimmel and Mr. Casey pursuing item number 1.

Chairman Russo also expressed a desire to schedule a joint meeting with Planning & Zoning and WPCA to pursue improved communication and cooperation.

Rails to Trails Task Force is Mr. Brett and Mr. Baxter

Chairman Russo asked Mr. Burdick if he has assembled a committee to address the Downtown Initiative. Mr. Burdick indicated that he can identify those individuals by the next meeting.

Mr. Krimmel commented to Ms. Donaldson that if they wish to put up a tent for the fishing derby they need to come before Planning & Zoning.

Mr. Moore commented that while he applauds the idea of bringing in businesses to understand their issues, it would be advisable to reach out to new businesses to understand their motivation to move to New Hartford.

Mr. Burdick commented that he attended a Town Meeting in Canton and they noted their lack of a sewer system as a handicap, whereas we have a sewer system and view that as a handicap when it should be viewed as an asset.

Chairman Russo asked all members to think of a couple of businesses that are not in town that could be targeted. He mentioned the possibility of recruiting a bike shop or a bike manufacturer.

Ms. Lloyd commented that she liked the Parking Lot items that had been established about a year and a half ago and asked that the practice be resumed.

Mrs. LaPlante introduced Lori Sekulski LaMere as a potential candidate for one of the vacant seats on the Commission and asked Lori to give members a summary of her experience. Mrs. LaMere explained that she has recently obtained her Real Estate license and joined a company who is looking to open an office in New Hartford. She also described the First Time Home Buyers seminar that their company is offering and her desire to encourage young homebuyers to purchase in New Hartford.

13. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Ms. Donaldson, to adjourn at 8:54 pm; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

**Debbie Ventre
Commission Secretary**